



**Public Oversight Hearing on Fiscal Year 2004 Spending and
The Status of Fiscal Year 2005 Spending and Program Implementation
March 2, 2005**

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I am William O. Howland, Jr., Director of the DC Department of Public Works (DPW).

With me today are members of my senior staff, Mark Brown, Deputy Director; Tom Henderson, Solid Waste Management Administrator; Teri Adams, Parking Services Administrator; Patricia Robinson, Fleet Management Deputy Administrator, and Andree Chan-Mann, our Agency Fiscal Officer.

Today, we are pleased to share with you, on behalf of the Administration, an overview of DPW's activities during FY 2004 and our progress so far this fiscal year. Afterward, we will be happy to respond to your questions.

DPW Organization And Mission

The Department of Public Works is an agency of approximately 1400 employees largely responsible for maintaining a clean, welcoming and attractive environment within the City of Washington.

Not only is DPW the *Clean City Agency*, it is also the *Green City Agency* as it is accountable for delivering critical environmental services such as residential trash and recyclables collection; scheduled street and alley cleaning; abandoned vehicle removal and nuisance abatement; neighborhood-based sanitation education and enforcement; graffiti removal, and fleet management programs that promote the use of clean energy. Additionally, DPW is responsible for facilitating curbside parking turnover, intersection traffic control and operating the city's towing control center.

FY 2004 was a transition year for DPW. I began my tenure midway through the year, stepping midstream into the path of several high profile initiatives. Fortunately, the dedicated professionals that work throughout the Department helped me along the learning curve without missing a beat. By the end of FY 2004, DPW had adjusted admirably to the change of leadership. I am confident that FY 2005 will be a stellar year for us as we move closer towards our vision of DPW as an agency known for its outstanding service delivery.

As you know, DPW is comprised of three major operational units dedicated to providing the critical municipal services that our residents deserve and expect. They are the Solid Waste Management Administration, the Parking Services Administration, and the Fleet Management Administration. Let me tell you how

each has contributed to improve our overall environment and enhanced the quality of life in our city.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION

Each year, DPW crews collect approximately 126,000 tons of trash from over 111,000 homes, making over 7.2 million service stops. Last year, we added about 1,000 new customers. Even with the added workload, our trash crews continued to meet collection schedules more than 99 percent of the time.

Our bulk collection program is one of our best. Appointments are now scheduled most of the time within 6 days of the request, and 99 percent of the time, we're there on the scheduled appointment date. And if we can't make it, we call and reschedule.

Improving the residential recycling collection has been one of my highest priorities since taking this position.

As you know, DPW assumed full responsibility for residential recycling collection on January 24th. I am happy to report that the service has improved. Missed collection requests to the call center are down, and anecdotal evidence shows that participation is up. This bodes well for the expansion of our pilot recycling program in Ward 7 that converts the residential program to single sort collections citywide.

In designing our new recycling program, DPW's Solid Waste Management Administration and its labor partner, the American Federation of State, County and

Municipal Employees, AFSCME, Local 2091, spent a year studying the current recycling collection system, as well as several best practice alternatives. I want to publicly thank James Ivey, President of Local 2091. He and his associates' energy and insights were invaluable during this process.

Central to the citywide single sort program is the new 32-gallon BLUE recycling cart that replaces the old bins. Like mini Supercans, the carts have wheels and lids to make storage and carrying easier for our residents.

“Single sort” recycling means that all recyclables will go into the same container. Residents no longer have to keep paper and other recyclables separated, nor will they have to lift heavy bins. These improvements will make recycling easier for all and encourage greater participation.

The materials will be taken for sorting and processing to a state-of-the-art Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), specially designed for single sort recycling.

The first of the new carts were distributed on schedule the week of January 31, 2005. To date, we have fully implemented the blue cart recycling program in Wards 7 and 8, along with most of Ward 5 and a portion of Ward 4. More than 35,000 carts have been distributed.

Although, it is too early to report concrete results, both tonnage and participation rates have increased significantly in the Wards using the carts.

We are very excited about the prospect of finally meeting the goals that Council has set for recycling in the District. I want to thank you, Madam Chair and this committee for your unwavering support of this important environmental program.

Now, I'd like to tell you about our work to expand Recycling in the Commercial sector.

In the last two years, our recycling inspectors have performed thousands of on-site inspections, offering technical assistance and guidance to help business owners comply with the District's recycling law. In 2004, inspectors from the Office of Recycling approved 940 commercial recycling plans, tripling the number of approved plans from FY 2003.

Until last year, most of our efforts had been focused on educating the business community about the benefits of recycling. However, since August of 2003, our inspectors have been taking enforcement actions. In FY 2004, inspectors issued 508 warnings and 369 notices of violation for repeated failure to comply with commercial recycling requirements.

Next, I want to mention our newest program – Recycling in Government Buildings

DPW, in partnership with the Office of Property Management, is expanding recycling opportunities in government buildings. Not only are we enhancing recycling programs in our major buildings, we are also promoting the importance of waste reduction to District employees through monthly meetings with agency

recycling coordinators and publication of a newsletter describing recycling activities across the government.

And District employees are beginning to embrace the effort. The amount of materials diverted for recycling from District government offices doubled in FY 2004 from the previous year. One thousand seventy eight (1,078) tons of paper, cardboard and bottles and cans were collected during the past fiscal year in comparison to 531 tons of materials in FY 2003. The results for FY 2005 are even more promising.

DPW and OPM continue to work collaboratively to raise the profile of recycling even further. In recent months, we have vastly improved recycling programs in both the Wilson Building and the Reeves Center. We will next turn our attention to creating enhanced recycling opportunities at 301 C Street and One Judiciary Square.

Street & Alley Cleaning is one of this agency's most labor-intensive and environmentally critical responsibilities.

During the day, our Street and Alley Cleaning Division is sweeping residential neighborhoods, as well as high visibility commercial areas like Mt. Pleasant and Adams Morgan, Capitol Hill, Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and Benning Road. They are also at work eliminating graffiti, pulling down posters, mowing public rights-of-way and abating nuisance vacant lots. At night, crews collect trash from the city's 4000 public litter cans and sweep the downtown core and gateway streets that cannot be effectively cleaned during the day.

This division also takes the lead in other important areas, such as fall leaf collection; DPW's role in snow fighting efforts; emergency debris removal, and special events ranging from weekend clean ups to state funerals.

The large commuter thoroughfares within the city limits that are part of the Interstate Highway System are cleaned under a contract administered by the District Department of Transportation in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration. During our Fiscal Year 2006 budget hearing next month, we will be discussing proposed changes to this arrangement.

As you know, Madam Chair, DPW typically suspends residential street sweeping during the winter months because the mechanical sweepers use a fine spray of water under their brushes. While the water lowers dust and reduces wear on the brushes, it can be problematic during sub-freezing weather. However, I have received a number of requests from residents who want year-round street cleaning.

Therefore, I have asked staff to tell me what resources are needed to deliver mechanical street sweeping services 12 months a year.

Since we are discussing cleanliness, I want to say a couple of words about the Clean City Ratings and the Office of the Clean City Coordinator....

As this committee is aware, DPW relies on the quarterly Cleanliness Ratings conducted by the Office of the Clean City Coordinator, now a part of the Mayor's Neighborhood Services program, and its volunteer staff. The ratings provide key data that helps us deploy our resources citywide more effectively. During the September 2004 rating period we received an overall rating of 90% meaning 90%

of the city's streets and alleys fell into the two top categories, clean or moderately clean. All major corridors and high visibility streets and alleys received a rating in one of these top two categories, as did 93% of residential streets and 81% of residential alleys.

Another workhorse in our solid waste management program is SWEEP.

The Solid Waste Education and Enforcement Program, or SWEEP, is an invaluable member of our environmental services team. SWEEP works to educate District residents and businesses about their responsibilities regarding proper trash and sanitation procedures.

For those who still haven't gotten the message, SWEEP inspectors also issue tickets – over 8,300 in FY 2004, an increase of more than 30% over FY 2003 – for violations such as illegal dumping, rat harborage, or a business owner's failure to keep his sidewalks and dumpster areas clean.

Working closely with the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD) *Operation Fight Back* and the Neighborhood Services Initiative, SWEEP inspectors are an integral part of the eight, ward-based Neighborhood Services Core Teams. Each team works collaboratively to identify persistent problem areas and develop cross-agency work plans to restore quality of life in blighted, high-crime areas.

We have also focused resources on Hotspots, high crime areas designated by MPD. During FY 2004 we saw an average 70% drop in the incidence of solid waste violations in Hotspots and other problem areas. SWEEP Inspectors also

coordinated the response by other DPW programs including alley cleaning, illegal dumping cleanup and graffiti removal in Hotspots.

SWEEP inspectors also comprise one half of the Environmental Crimes Unit (ECU), a partnership between DPW and the police department, created to investigate felony illegal dumping and to bring to justice the criminals involved in trashing our city. In FY 2004, the ECU conducted hundreds of investigations.

SWEEP staff also coordinated two highly successful Household Hazardous Waste collection days. A total of more than 1200 participants brought consumer electronics to be recycled and 1650 individuals brought chemicals needing safe disposal. During the fall event alone, we collected 39 tons of electronics and 184 barrels of chemicals.

I want to also acknowledge our versatile Nuisance Abatement Team. This operation complements the work of the SWEEP inspectors by cleaning nuisance vacant lots and other problem properties that have been cited, and which the owners have chosen to ignore. In FY 2004, this operation cleaned over 595 properties, a 77% increase, abated 6,269 graffiti sites, a 15-fold increase, and removed nearly 11,000 illegal posters. Additionally, this small but motivated team pitches in where necessary, doing everything from filling sandbags to driving light plows during snow events.

Trash Transfer Stations

A sometimes-overlooked area of our operations is disposal. DPW operates two aging waste transfer stations. The 30-year old facilities both needed work and are currently undergoing capital renovations.

In March 2004, major reconstruction began on the Benning Road site. A substantial amount of work has already been completed. We have been operating from a portion of the new loadout area since December 2004. The station should be back to full operation this spring. Plans and specifications for Phase 2 of the Fort Totten renovation have been completed and the Zoning Commission has approved the project. Bids should be received this fiscal year.

PARKING SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

The Parking Services Administration is the Department's second major operational unit that I would like to speak about today.

One of the major functions of Parking Services is the removal of abandoned and junk vehicles from District streets and alleys. This activity is critical to accomplishing our mission of keeping the city safe and clean. I am delighted to report that we have eliminated the backlog of abandoned vehicles on public space. Right now our performance measure is to remove abandoned vehicles within 13 business days. I am challenging our staff to improve that performance measure to five business days or one week.

We still have some work to do removing abandoned vehicles on private property within the stated time period. However, those cases are a bit more difficult to resolve because we are dealing with property rights.

Impoundment Lot Merger

I am also pleased to report to the committee that the Parking Services Administration vacated the Addison Road Impoundment Lot and merged it with

the Blue Plains Storage and Impoundment facility last September. The lot has been reconfigured to accommodate the consolidation, and we are currently storing all impounded at Blue Plains.

Let's move on to Parking and Traffic Enforcement. The Department of Public Works monitors on-street parking to improve traffic flow and public safety, and to maintain access to curbside spaces by encouraging turnover of short-term public parking – whether at metered spaces or on residential streets. These goals are achieved by encouraging compliance with the District's parking regulations and taking enforcement actions – ticketing, booting and towing – as necessary.

We now have 214 parking officers, or 89 percent of our authorized positions filled.

Intersection Control

The traffic control initiative was a model of collaboration between DPW, MPD, DDOT, the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1975 and the downtown business community. The program was established, with your support Chairman Schwartz, in response to concerns raised by the Mayor's Downtown Congestion Task Force.

DPW implemented a solution to reduce traffic congestion and improve pedestrian safety during rush hours by placing staff at key intersections in the downtown business core. Fewer vehicles trapped in gridlock means less vehicular emissions and helps create a cleaner and safer environment for all of us. Twenty eight traffic enforcement officers monitor several intersections during rush hour, and then enforce parking regulations with an emphasis on double parking and loading zone violators for the balance of their workday.

FLEET MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION

The Fleet Management Administration plays a pivotal role in achieving DPW's environmental goals. Fleet procures and maintains over 3,000 District vehicles and provides fuel for an additional 3,000 pieces of equipment.

With more active participation from D.C. agencies and departments, Fleet was able to achieve the highest level of preventative maintenance service yet - nearly 80%. This resulted in better and cleaner running vehicles and vastly improved daily readiness for mission critical vehicles.

And the best part is, we're working to help the environment at the same time by investing in vehicles that run on cleaner fuels.

Alternative Fuel Programs

As many of you know, DC is ranked among the largest alternative-fuel powered fleets in the region with 329 alternative fuel vehicles, representing 10 percent of the fleet maintained by our operation.

Further, we exceeded the federal goal for purchasing alternatively fueled light vehicles during the 2004 model year period. Alternative fuels power 84% of the light vehicles purchased by the Fleet Management Administration last year.

Fleet Management was awarded a grant from the US Dept. of Energy to install a second compressed natural gas (CNG) fuel dispenser at the West Virginia Avenue fueling station. The new CNG pump is anticipated to be available for customer agencies' use in spring 2005.

Maintenance Services Operations and Technology

Our Fleet team has continued to increase operational efficiency through the intelligent adoption of new technology. We increased repair and diagnostic productivity in FY 2004, thereby minimizing vehicle downtime. The result is improved service delivery capacity throughout the city.

Fleet has also begun to install a new keyless refueling system on newly acquired vehicles. This technology provides increased management and accountability of fuel dispensed to government vehicles at our fueling sites.

Madam chair, you will be pleased to note that FMA is continuing to decrease the environmental impact of its operations by reducing the number of SUVs in service from 300 in FY 2003 to 234 in FY 2004. An additional 54 leased SUVs will be removed from the fleet within the next 60 days, which will leave us with approximately 180 SUVs in operation across those agencies within Fleet's responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Each of us at DPW has done a job to benefit the environment in which we live. Hopefully, we have made our city cleaner, safer, and more attractive to residents and visitors alike.

Success doesn't happen by accident, and it is a tribute to the hard working folks at DPW. We measure our success on a daily basis with an eye toward the future.

And, success rarely happens without help. I want to acknowledge the pivotal role played by this Committee in achieving our successes. Working together, we have made progress. Working together, we will continue to do so. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have for us.